

Excerpts from Cardinal Carlo Martini's book "Night Conversations with Cardinal Martini" (2012)

- 1) about sin: "The Church has talked a lot about sin, too much." "Where can we find today the training and preparation for the battle against what the Bible calls sin? That doesn't mean primarily our personal weaknesses, but the great injustices and needs of the world against which we are to fight. Jesus wants to free humanity from this distress, which is called sin, because it is not the divine will."
- 2) on celibacy: "In all churches except the Roman Catholic Church priests can marry, even in the Greek Catholic Church. The idea of priests not marrying came from the monastic life. [...] For celibacy it is important that the community gives the priest a place of love and security. [...] We should not forget that the Roman Catholic Church didn't legislate for the celibacy of priests until the Tridentine Council in the sixteenth century, even though compulsory celibacy had existed since the eleventh century."
- 3) on the youth and on making a mess: "If it has become more peaceful in the world of youth, then I am more disturbed by the thought that they are somewhere else in their hearts, that they are just not interested in the Church and its further development any more, If it gets too peaceful in the Church, if a feeling of satisfaction takes root in society, I think of Jesus' desire to throw a flaming torch of inspiration onto the Earth." "We can't teach young people anything. We can only help them to listen to their inner master. [...] Understanding and insight must be given to him or her from within." "The young people will be prophets; that means they must be critical." "We cannot require perfect lives from our children and youth. They will gradually find their way. The paths cannot be prescribed from above, from desks and pulpits. The Church's leadership will be relieved of a burden if it listens and trusts dialogue with youth." "Some [youth] are perhaps on the wrong track. They will be aware of it. I don't worry about anyone, so long as he or she is on the way."
- 4) on the good side of conflict: "Where there is still conflict, the fire is burning and the Holy Spirit is at work."
- 5) on a poor and humble Church: "Once I used to have dreams for the Church; of a Church who goes her way in poverty and humility. Of a Church independent of the powers of this world. [...] I would dream of a Church giving space to people who think outside the box...." "Of course some officials or bishops of the Church in our Western countries are still sitting behind walls that are too thick, either in new offices or in old palaces."
- 6) on conscience: "The times are long gone when the Church could talk you into having a guilty conscience."
- 7) on *Humanae Vitae*: "I admit that the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* has also unfortunately created negative responses. Many people have distanced themselves from the Church, and the Church from the people."

Major damage has occurred.” “The encyclical raised many human aspects of sexuality in a helpful way. Today, however, we have a wider horizon in which to ask questions about sexuality.” “The Pope will probably not retract the encyclical, but he can write a new one and go even further.” “Even if condoms were allowed for HIV-infected couples as a 'lesser evil', that is probably not enough. This opinion had got me into arguments. I have become *Cardeal da camisinha* [...] [“Cardinal of the Condoms”]

- 8) on the Sixth Commandment: “In the past the Church probably said too much about the sixth commandment. Sometimes silence would have been better.” “By self-giving, people open themselves to God. In all our physical encounters, we strive toward this goal. Having this goal in view is more important than asking whether this or that is permitted or a sin.” “Today no bishop or priest is unaware of the fact that physical intimacy before marriage is a fact. We have to rethink this if we wish to protect the family and promote marital fidelity. Nothing will be gained by unrealistic positions or prohibitions.” “The Bible noticeably limits itself in statements on sexuality.” “Previously sexuality was seen as very limited, exclusively concerned with conception. Moral theologians have spoken of *finis primarius*, the primary goal of sex. Also in this area, the Second Vatican Council opened up a much wider horizon and deliberately ascribed equal significance to the partnership and the mutual love of the partners.”
- 9) on homosexuality: “Among people I know there are homosexual couples, people who are highly regarded and public-minded. I have never been asked, and it would never occur to me, to judge them. [...] The Bible judges homosexuality with strong words. The background to this is the problematic practice in the ancient world, when men would have boys and male lovers alongside their families. [...] The Bible wants to protect the family, the wife, and the children's space. [...] The deepest concern of the Holy Scriptures, however, is the protection of the family and a healthy space for children – something now seen among homosexual couples. As a result, I am already leaning toward a hierarchy of values in these matters and basically not towards equality.” “The Church will have to work on a new culture of sexuality and relationships.”
- 10) on *viri probati*: “Perhaps not all men called to be priests have this gift [to live a celibate life]. The Church will have to think of some way to handle this. Increasing numbers of parishes are being entrusted to one priest, or dioceses are importing priests from foreign cultures. The possibility of ordaining *viri probati* – experienced men, tried and tested in faith and in dealing with others – is worth discussing, in any case.”
- 11) on women in Church leadership; female deaconesses and priests: “With regard to the Church leadership, however, I would like to ask for patience. It will discover more and more of women's possibilities. Things have progressed a lot and will continue to progress, especially if we treat one another as partners. [...] It is noticeable that women everywhere are entering positions of leadership in the Church. [...]”

Leadership by women in church communities is biblical; [...] In the New Testament we meet the deaconesses who were part of the early church until the Middle Ages. Women theologians have discovered the importance of these women for the Church in recent years.” After Martini visited Archbishop George Leonard Carey, then-primate of the Anglican Church of England, he said: “His church was suffering tensions because of the ordination of women. I tried to give him courage to take a risk that could also help us treat women more fairly and understand how things might develop further.”

- 12) on Luther: “Luther was a great reformer. Most important is probably his love of the Holy Scriptures, out of which he created good ideas.”
- 13) in opposition to proselytism: What would you say to someone who doesn't believe in God? Martini: “I wouldn't try to convince him of anything, but would say to him instead that he should try living life without a belief in God, and think deeply about himself.”
- 14) in favor of environmentalism: How can we live with suffering and misfortune: “A third consideration: we should ask ourselves, *How am I involved in this misfortune and responsible for it? For the destruction of the environment, for global warming, for unemployment, for the radicalization of religion and of the oppressed?*”
- 15) on the destruction of souls who otherwise would go to hell: “I hope that sooner or later God redeems everyone. [...] I can't imagine how Hitler or a murderer who has abused children can be with God. It's easier for me to think that such people are simply extinguished. [...] But perhaps in the other world God has new possibilities. [...] Yes, there is hell, but nobody knows if anyone is there.”
- 16) on Islam: “... we must get to know others, for example, Muslims. Many say that Muslims are in favor of a holy way, that they would all more or less want to convert us by force. That may be partly true, but it is not supported by the Qu'ran.” “In the first place, we Christians have to let go of widespread prejudices and of the notion of all Muslims as the enemy. Terrorists cannot claim justification for action from the Qu'ran. There are fundamentalists in both camps. [...] We can find agreement between the teachings in the Bible and the Qu'ran, just as Islam and Judaism have similar roots.”
- 17) on social justice: “The Church of Jesus Christ should contribute to making the world a more just and more peaceful place.”
- 18) against populism: “If aggressive wars are conducted in the name of God, if Christianity is used for populist purposes in an election, then alarm bells go off for me.”
- 19) God is not Catholic: “You can't make God a Catholic. God is beyond all the barriers and borders we create.”
- 20) religious indifference: “The goal of all churches, all religions, is to do good in the world and to make the

world a brighter place. And Jesus will make them better able to carry out that task. [...] Buddhism and Yoga are wonderful ways into a deeper life, [...] You will be glad you are Catholic, and you will even be glad that the other person is Protestant or Muslim. [...] Religious communities serve to build up and strengthen people and to lead them to God."

- 21) on the origin of evil: "No one can answer the question about the origin of evil."
- 22) on purgatory: "Purgatory is one of the human concepts of a way to spare people from hell. The Church developed the idea of purgatory which claims that even if you are a person who has created so much suffering and produced so much hell, perhaps even after death there is still some place where you can be cured, where you can change your ways and where you have another chance."
- 23) against triumphalism and rigorism: "Jesus was amazed at the faith of the Gentiles. It's not the priests that he puts up as models, but the heretics, the Samaritans." "Human beings and even the Church, however, are always in the danger of seeing themselves as absolute."